



June 16, 2015

House Criminal Justice Committee

Re: HB4248, 4249, 4250, 4137, 4138, 4419, 4420, 4709, 4710, 4711 , 4501 and 4536.

The Libertarian Party of Michigan commends this committee and the Representatives who sponsored these bills for addressing the serious problems caused by overcriminalization in existing Michigan law. The excessive costs of the justice and penal system being corrected by these bills are unwarranted burdens the average citizen and taxpayer should not and cannot afford to ignore.

Some of you are surely aware of the Pew Center report from 2012 that showed Michigan has one of the longest average lengths of stay for prisoners, and longer criminal sentences in general than other states. Their study also showed that twenty-four percent of released inmates could have served shorter sentences without compromising public safety. This is important information that justifies allowing more definition and flexibility in the parole process to release inmates earlier who pose no threat to the public, as detailed in HB 4138.

The bill repealing antiquated language and acts that conflict with the First Amendment right to free speech are long overdue (HB 4248).

Another bill of particular importance is HB 4711, which eliminates adding prison time for failure to pay fines, which is effectively an unconstitutional “debtor’s prison”.

Also especially important is HB 4536, to provide compensation for wrongful imprisonment and require expungement of the record. If the state makes such an egregious error, those wrongfully punished should not be forced to file complex suits to collect damages and clear their name. This makes it clear that compensation is owed and establishes a clear path to restitution.

All of these bills presented before this committee today deserve bipartisan support to be reported out to the house for approval and passage as soon as possible.

The cumulative result will be lower prison system costs born by taxpayers and a criminal justice system more in line with other states and the Constitution.

For those reasons the Libertarian Party of Michigan supports these bills and urges the Criminal Justice committee to move them forward.

Thank you for your consideration and listening to our comments.

Sincerely,

Will Tyler White
Legislative Committee Chair